

# **TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION ON DESCRIPTIVE TEXT THROUGH COOPERATIVE INTEGRATED READING AND COMPOSITION (CIRC) METHOD**

**Eva Rihayati, Y. Gatot Sutapa Y., Eni Rosnija**

English Education Study Program of Language and Arts Education Department  
FKIP Universitas Tanjungpura, Pontianak  
Email: rihayatieva@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This research was aimed at finding out the effectiveness of the use of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method in teaching reading comprehension on descriptive text. To achieve the objective of the research, a pre-experimental research was conducted at MA Khulafaur Rasyidin with the subject of the research was the tenth grade students in class XC in Academic Year 2015/2016 which was chosen by using cluster random sampling technique. The findings of the research obviously showed that the use of CIRC method had a highly significant effect on the students' reading comprehension on descriptive text shown by the students' improved scores on the post-test and the students' learning behavior towards reading activity. To sum up, the present research findings proved that teaching reading comprehension on descriptive text by using CIRC method is effective.

**Keywords:** *CIRC Method, Reading Comprehension, Descriptive Text*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui efektivitas penggunaan metode Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition pada pengajaran pemahaman membaca pada teks deskriptif. Untuk mencapai tujuan penelitian, sebuah penelitian pre-experimental dilakukan di MA Khulafaur Rasyidin dengan subjek penelitian adalah siswa kelas XC pada Tahun Ajaran 2015/2016 yang dipilih menggunakan teknik cluster random sampling. Hasil penelitian dengan jelas menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan metode CIRC mempunyai efek yang signifikan terhadap pemahaman membaca siswa pada teks deskriptif yang ditunjukkan dari peningkatan skor post-test siswa dan perilaku belajar siswa terhadap aktivitas membaca. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa hasil dari penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa pengajaran pemahaman membaca pada teks deskriptif efektif dengan penggunaan metode CIRC.

**Kata kunci:** Metode CIRC, Pemahaman Membaca, Teks Deskriptif

**A**mong the four English skills, reading is often considered challenging to develop by non-native English speaking students. Reading skill is important as it has something to do with the reading comprehension which deals with the conscious and unconscious thinking process of constructing the intended meaning and done by bringing along the readers' background knowledge related to the text they read (Mikulecky, 2008). However, in reality, many students demonstrate problems related to low reading comprehension. Students' lack of sufficient vocabulary would sometimes become a problem which then affects the results of the learning process. As effective reading where the students are able to comprehend text and construct meaning is one of important aspects to succeed in language learning, the use of an appropriate method in teaching reading comprehension should be taken into consideration.

Based on the English syllabus of School Based Curriculum (KTSP) for the tent grade students, there are several types of text that should be taught and comprehended by the students. One of the texts is descriptive text. Descriptive text describes a particular person, place, or thing in details which can sometimes be visualized by the readers of the text (Djuharie, 2007). The subject of the text should be described in such a vivid detail so that the readers can easily form a precise picture of what is being described. Like many other types of text, descriptive text has distinctive language features which make it differ from other text type. Those language features include specific nouns to identify the person, place, and things being described, noun phrase, a variety of types of adjectives, figurative language such as simile or metaphor to give illustration of comparison, and the use of Simple Present Tense. Such features provide details that help the readers imagine the subject being described.

Reading comprehension on descriptive text requires the students to be able to comprehend the text based on its generic structure, namely identification and description, which generally consists of several paragraphs from which the students have to be able to identify five reading components i.e. main idea, specific information, reference, inference, and the meaning of words in context. Nevertheless, many students find it difficult to understand the text comprehensively. Two main aspects that are likely to interfere with students' reading comprehension ability might be the students themselves and the learning process they have. The students' lack of vocabulary apparently has a big impact on their comprehension of the text. The students also lack the ability to guess the meaning of the difficult words from the text. Often the teacher has to find a text with easy and familiar words to the students so that they can comprehend the text easier. Moreover, in the learning process, the teacher usually implements conventional learning model such as lecturing, question-answer, and taking notes. The students who understand the teacher's explanation can do the task easily, while ones who don't will usually have difficulty in doing it.

The students' problem in reading comprehension cannot be taken for granted. The use of appropriate teaching method is considered important. One of suggested methods to promote reading comprehension is the Cooperative Integrated Reading

and Composition (CIRC) method. The method emphasizes on the group work where the students will have a series of activities including partner reading, Treasure Hunt activity, word meaning, story retell, and direct instruction in reading comprehension (Slavin, 1991). Assigning team activities in CIRC is considered a suitable way to promote reading comprehension since in working cooperatively in pairs, team and groups, the students will be able to maximize their learning process. In CIRC method, the students are put in mixed-ability cooperative teams with one high, two medium, and one low achieving student in each team. This is done so that there will be an exchange of information among the students in team in which each student is accountable for their own learning and also facilitate students' contribution in the learning of others. It is further supported by Felder and Brent (2007), that in heterogeneous team, the weaker students gain from seeing how better students approach problems, and the stronger students gain a deeper understanding of the subject by teaching it to others.

The CIRC method provides a series of engaging activities in which students will be able to improve their ability to read and comprehend the given texts with other students in an assigned group work activity. The features of CIRC are integrated within a lesson cycle which, according to Slavin (1991), is started from forming teams, conducting basal-related activities as follows; partner reading in which the students sit side by side in pairs and read the text. As they read, they cooperatively underline the new or difficult words they found in the text. The second activity is word meaning, then Treasure Hunts or text comprehension. During this step, the students with their partners discuss the responses to a list of questions about the text listed on Treasure Hunt sheet. This activity ensures comprehension of the text by all students. The next activity is story retell & composition. After answering the questions, the students compose a summary of the main point of the text with their partner. The summary has to cover the generic structure of the descriptive text which includes identification and description part.

In line with the importance of using an appropriate method to promote reading comprehension, many studies have been conducted to explore the effectiveness of the use of CIRC method to increase student's reading comprehension ability. Junariyah (2014), who conducted a pre-experimental research on the second year students of MTsN Rajeg, Tangerang in academic year 2013/2014, revealed that the use of CIRC is effective to make the students motivated in doing reading activity. It is also in line with the finding of study by Gupta and Ahuja (2014) on the impact of the CIRC method on reading comprehension achievement in English among seventh graders which revealed that the CIRC method gave a significant improvement in their reading comprehension achievement than the students who are instructed through traditional method. The findings of the two studies showed that the use of CIRC method can effectively enhance students' reading comprehension ability.

Based on the background explained above, the researcher wanted to investigate whether or not the use of CIRC method in teaching reading

comprehension on descriptive text is effective, and was therefore conducting a pre-experimental research to the tenth grade students of MA Khulafaur Rasyidin in academic year 2015/2016. In short, by conducting this research, the researcher obtained quite much information that could hopefully help teachers maximize their teaching process and increase students' reading comprehension ability by the use of CIRC method. Teachers need to concern more on how they can use CIRC to manage the classroom effectively so that the students will be engaged actively cooperated with their classmates to enhance their learning. It is expected that the more information the teachers can get from this research, the more effective their learning process becomes.

## **METHOD**

To answer the research questions, the researcher conducted a pre-experimental research because it is considered as an appropriate design to be applied in determining the intended effect of a tested idea or practice or procedure on an outcome or dependant variables (Creswell, 2012: 295). In this research, the researcher intended to find out whether or not the CIRC method is effective in teaching reading comprehension particularly on descriptive texts. The procedures of pre-experimental research design which were conducted by the researcher were described in the following steps: (1) Applying pretest (O1) to the experimental group to measure students' initial ability on reading comprehension which was judged by their mean score before the treatment was given, (2) Administering the treatment (X), which was the use of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition method, (3) Applying posttest (O2) to know the changes which occur as the result of the applied treatments judged by students' mean score, (4) Comparing O1 and O2 to determine the mean score of the pretest and the posttest, (5) Applying statistical formula (*t*-test) to determine whether or not teaching reading comprehension by using Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition method is effective, (6) Applying the Effect Size formula to investigate the effectiveness of the treatment given on students' reading comprehension ability.

The population of this research is the tenth grade students of MA Khulafaur Rasyidin Pontianak in Academic Year 2015/2016 which are divided into three classes with the total number of students is 51 students. In this research, the researcher used cluster random sampling technique to select the sample. Each class has an equal chance of being chosen in this case. Since this is a pre-experimental research, the researcher would take only one class for the research to be conducted. Of the three classes, the researcher took class XC which consists of 19 students as the sample.

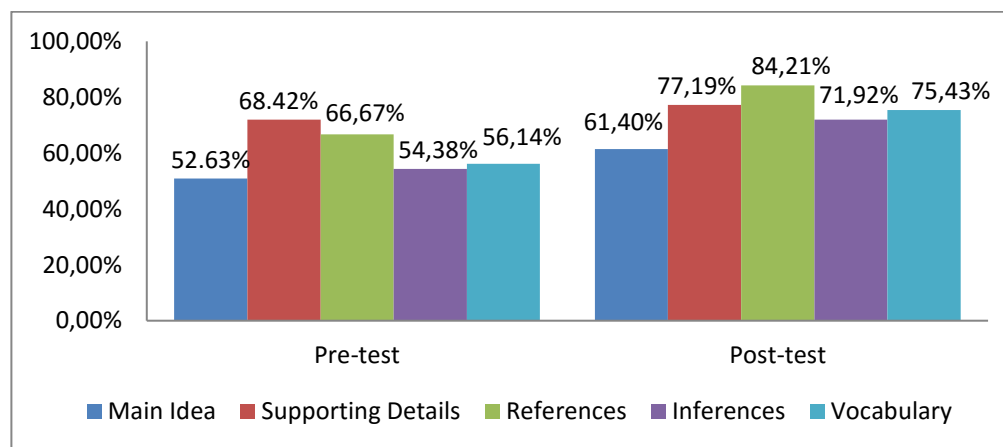
In collecting data, the researcher used the relevant tool which was reading test. The researcher measured the students' ability in reading comprehension by administering pre-test and post-test on the experimental group in this research. The test was in form of multiple choices since. The test required the students to identify main idea, identify supporting details, identify references, draw inference, and

interpret the meaning of words from the text. Before carrying out the test, it is required for the researcher to evaluate it under several criteria. One of the criteria used is validity which focuses not on the instrument but on the interpretation of the scores that are drawn from the instrument. In this pre-experimental research, the researcher applied content validity to the test. In determining content validity, the researcher would need to define the concept first, then, develop item content that if the content does not accurately reflect or represent the concept, then there is little or no content validity. To match the test with the concept which would be measured, the researcher, therefore, established table of specification. The table made it easier to write a test which would indicate there was a match between what was taught and what was tested.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

To find out the significant effect of the method, the pre-test and post-test were conducted. Based on the calculation of the students' scores on pre and post-test, most of the students got eight to eleven correct answers, ranging from 53 to 73. The percentage of reading comprehension aspects i.e main idea, supporting details, references, inferences, vocabulary achieved by the students was described in the following chart:



**Graph 1. The Percentage of Students' Achievement of Reading Comprehension Aspects**

From the chart above, it was found that there was an improvement of each aspect of reading comprehension between the pre-test and post-test which consequently resulted in better scores of the post-test after the method was being applied. From the tabulation of the result of the pre-test, the students' achievement

was categorized poor. The lowest score was 47, and the highest one was 73, while the mean of the pre-test based on the computation was 59.5. After the treatments were carried out, it was found that the students' post-test scores improved significantly. The mean of the post-test was 74, the lowest score was 60, and the highest one is 87. After the mean of the pre and post-test were calculated, the researcher then calculated the *t*-test, and was followed by the effect size.

Based on the description of the calculation of the *t*-test, it can be inferred that the *t*-obtained which was 7.82 was significant at level .05 and level.01, which means that the null hypothesis can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is therefore accepted which led the researcher to conclude that teaching reading comprehension on descriptive text by using the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method on the tenth grade students of MA Khulafaur Rasyidin Pontianak in Academic Year 2015/2016 is effective. The calculation of the effect size of 1.70 was categorized as high which indicates that the use of the CIRC method has a highly significant effect on the students' reading comprehension on descriptive text.

## **Discussion**

From the data analyzed in the previous part, it was found that the students' reading comprehension ability increased significantly after the class received a three-time treatment by the application of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method indicated by the mean of the post-test which is higher than the mean of the pre-test. The increase of the mean indicated that, generally, the treatment gave a good impact on the students' reading comprehension ability, so that the post-test result showed a better output than the pre-test. From the tabulation of the finding, the calculation of *t*-test showed that the obtained value exceeded the given value which meant the use of CIRC method was effective, and in line with this, the result of the calculation of the Effect Size was categorized as highly effective which led the researcher to conclude that the use of CIRC method gave highly significant effect in teaching reading comprehension on descriptive text.

The findings of the present study were in line with the existing research findings which revealed that there was a significant difference in student's score before and after the method was applied indicated by the result of the statistical calculation that showed that the value of *t* observation was higher than *t* table which consequently resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis. Another research finding to support these results revealed that the group taught with CIRC method outscored significantly another group on post-test showing that the method gave a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension than ones who are instructed through traditional teaching method.

Besides being indicated by the statistical calculation, the effectiveness of CIRC method on students' reading comprehension was also shown by the students' learning process when the treatments were given where they became actively engaged in the activities conducted by the researcher. Being active here meant they were not

only sitting, and reading, and paying their attention to the researcher's explanation, but they were able to work on several activities actively with their teammates. It was in line with the theory proposed by Slavin that confirmed that the method was considered appropriate for teaching reading comprehension as it provided group work activities where the students facilitated each other's learning. During the treatments, the researcher discovered that the students could follow the CIRC activities easily although the researcher sometimes had to give the instruction more than once to avoid them from being confused. The students who were already paired off in the team got along well and did all the intended activities correctly.

With regard to the highly significant effect the CIRC method gave on students' reading comprehension, there were some causes that might have influenced it. The successfully done treatments more or less influenced the results of the study. Since the very first treatment given, the researcher tried to carry out the learning process based on the lesson plan made before. So it can be ensured that this research had been going in line with the procedures of what it was supposed to be like. During the first treatment, to avoid students' confusion, the researcher introduced each step of the CIRC activities. The researcher then introduced the learning topic which was descriptive text and showed the students a picture related to the topic, and asked the students some questions related to the picture. After doing a brainstorming activity, the class was divided into some groups which members were already determined by the teacher. There were five groups, four groups with four students, and one group with three students as the number of the students was nineteen. The researcher then handed each group two worksheets called "*Treasure Hunt Sheet*" (see Appendix 7) on which the students would work on the same descriptive text together. These steps and the next ones were repeated in the second and third treatment.

The next step would mostly be the students' part. In the *Partner Reading* phase, the students would read the text carefully in a given time. This activity was done in pairs. So, two students read the same text together. After reading, the researcher asked them to underline the words which they thought to be new or difficult for them. So the students should have read the text thoroughly. In the *Word Meaning* phase, the students then listed all the words they had underlined on the worksheet and found the meaning of the words. The use of dictionary was allowed in this phase, from which the researcher discovered that sometimes the use of dictionary wouldn't help much as not all words could be found in the dictionary, so consequently, in each of three treatment the students still asked the researcher the meaning of one word or two as they couldn't find the meaning in the dictionary.

After finding the meaning, the next step was *Treasure Hunt* which the researcher thought to be the most interesting phase for the students of all activities in all three treatments. In this phase, the students were given some questions and required them to work with their friends to be able to answer the questions. Working together with friends was found to be an effective learning process in this method as the students in each group could achieve the same learning goal with the help of others, moreover, this phase emphasized that all students had to understand how to

respond to the questions, so all students in each group had to work cooperatively. The researcher discovered that in this phase, some students actively gave their opinion on the responses of the questions given, and only a few who were being quiet. But when the researcher asked the questions to one of the quiet students, she could answer it correctly. In the next two treatments, as the researcher observed, the quiet ones became more active though.

After discussing the answers of the questions, the students were engaged in a kind of activity called *Numbered Heads Together* which was part of *Treasure Hunt Activity*. Before conducting the activity, the researcher made sure that all groups had managed to answer the questions. The students in each group were numbered off from one to four. The researcher took part in this activity. She called off a number, then the students with that number had to stand up, and the researcher randomly chose one student to answer the question. The researcher then asked other group whether or not the answer was correct, or that they had different opinion. In each of treatment, there was always group who had different responses to the questions, but it was okay that the answers didn't digress from the subject.

The next part would be the most challenging which was *Story Retell and Composition*, as the researcher discovered that the students mostly needed assistance to do it. The students in each group summarized the text they had learned in order to make it possible to remember the important points and key information of the text. In the first treatment, the researcher help the students highlight the important points of the text like the major and supporting idea. In the next treatment, the students mostly worked on themselves, though the researcher was still needed sometimes. The students' summary had to cover the *generic structure* of descriptive text which was identification part to introduce the subject, and description part to describe the subject. After summarizing the text, the students collected the *Treasure Hunt Sheet* to the researcher.

In the second and the third treatment, the students were getting familiar with the activities of CIRC method. They were more ready and also prepared themselves before the class began. The third treatment was shorter than the two previous treatments due to time limitation. The activities conducted included *Partner Reading*, *Word Meaning*, and *Treasure Hunt* as the post-test was conducted on that day. Through the use of *Treasure Hunt Sheet* in this research, the researcher was certain that it facilitated the students to comprehend the text well as the sheet guided them to do the required activities systematically. The repeated activities in each treatment were actually to improve their reading comprehension which consequently resulted in their improved scores in the post-test than ones on the pre-test. Moreover, the calculation of the Effect Size was categorized as highly effective that led the researcher to reject the Null Hypothesis and concluded that the use of CIRC method gave highly significant effect in teaching reading comprehension on descriptive text on the tenth grade students of MA Khulafaur Rasyidin Pontianak in academic year 2015/2016.



## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **Conclusion**

Referring to the discussion of the research, it was concluded that the use of CIRC method in teaching reading comprehension on descriptive text was effective indicated by the higher mean of the post-test. The CIRC activities enabled students to actively participate in the learning process and show positive response to the reading activity when the treatments were being conducted. They also have better reading comprehension which could be observed from the result of the treatments, that the students were able to outscore significantly on the test after the method was applied. Besides that, in this research, the use of group work was able to help students learn better in comprehending the text. It was found that the cooperation that built up between the students enabled them to discuss on the subject easily. Moreover, the learning activities conducted by the researcher had been systematically arranged so the students were able to follow the instructions and find the learning process enjoyable for them. This was what made it consequently resulted in the highly significant result of the Effect Size which responded positively to the research questions formulated by the researcher.

### **Suggestions**

From the conclusion above and referring to the result obtained in this research, the researcher would like to suggest the English language teacher to:

1. Establish group work with mixed ability students especially when teaching reading so that the students can help each other when having difficulty in comprehending text and make their learning meaningful.
2. Hand over a worksheet completed with the task for both team and individual work in each of learning process so that the students would work systematically and help overcome the time limitation.
3. Provide pictures related to the learning topic, what is being described by the teacher should be clear to help avoid students' confusion and help them do a brainstorming activity.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed). University of Nebraska-Lincoln: Pearson.
- Djuharie, O. S. (2007). *Genre*. Bandung: CV. Yrama Widya.

- Felder, R. M. & Brent, R. (2007). Cooperative learning. In P. A. Mabrouk (Ed.), *Active Learning: Models from the Analytical Sciences*, ACS Symposium Series 970 (Chapter 4, pp. 34–53). Washington, DC: American Chemical Society.
- Gupta, M. & Ahuja, J. (2014). Cooperative integrated reading composition (CIRC) impact on reading comprehension achievement in english among seventh graders. *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature (Impact: Ijrhal)*, 2 (5), May 2014, 37-46.
- Junariyah. (2014). *The effectiveness of using CIRC technique to improve students' reading comprehension on recount text of second year students of MTSN Rajeg in academic year 2013/2014*. Jakarta: Unpublished.
- Mikulecky, B. S. (2008). *Teaching reading in a second language*. Retrieved from <http://www.longmanhomeusa.com/>.
- Slavin, R.E. (1991). *Student team learning: A practical guide to cooperative learning* (3<sup>rd</sup>ed). Washington, D. C.: National Education Association.